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The Classical Weekly

VOLUME XXIV, No. 20

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ANCIENT JEUX D'ESPRIT AND POETICAL ECCENTRICITIES

Turpe est difficiles habere nugas
et stultus labor est ineptiarum.
Martial 2. 86. 9-10.

The ancients themselves said that poetical eccentricities began with Homer. The epigram which Martial composed (9.11) when he had to write on the Emperor's favorite Æarînus is well known; compare 12-17:

Dicunt Eiarinon tamen poetae,
sed Graeci, quibus est nihil negatum,
et quos "Apes" "Apes" decet sonare:
nobis non licet esse tam disertis
qui Musas colimus severiores.

Whatever the explanation of "Apes" "Apes" may be, it is wrong to call the shift of quantity a mere eccentricity; we may call it a license, but there is properly no such thing as a poetical license; if a thing violates the genius of a language, it is an error, if it does not violate the genius of a language, it is no license, but a refinement. Undoubtedly "Apes" "Apes" was originally felt as a refinement; its justification is, however, no longer obvious. To the ancients Homer was full of 'licenses' and eccentricities. This was due partly to their defective texts, partly to their defective methods of explanation. With our comparatively sound texts, and the restoration of the digamma and other archaic forms, nine-tenths of these peculiarities disappear, though there are still left disconcerting scansion-like *δφίς* and *ἐπελ* in which the first syllable must be counted 'long'. But it was pardonable for Martial with his texts of the Greek poets to marvel at their eccentricities.

Some of the peculiarities of Homer, such as the scansion of *ἀθάνατος* with the first vowel long, became part and parcel of Greek poetry: the long initial alpha became obligatory. So *κᾶλδς κᾶλδς* became the rule rather than the exception, and was clearly considered an elegance. It was imitated by the Romans, e. g. Vergil, Eclogues 6.44 *Hylā, Hylā*, Aeneid 2.663 *patris patrem*². This variation of quantity was clearly based on some natural tendency of the language, as may be seen from its use in folksongs: compare Πλείστον ὄδλον ὄδλον λει, λουλον 'λει, and Ἄλει μύλα ἄλει, καὶ γὰρ Πιττακὸς ἄλει³.

A peculiar form of poetical trifling was the construction of rhopalic verses ('club-shaped' verses⁴), of which the minute investigations⁵ of the ancients found a specimen in Iliad 3.182 ὦ μάκαρ Ἀτρεΐδῃ, μοιρηγενέ,

¹I should call syllables 'light', 'heavy'. See my edition of Vergil, 1928 version, Introduction, § 258, C. K. >.

²On *patris patrem* see my edition of the Aeneid, Introduction, § 283, with Note. C. K. >.

³Compare H. W. Smyth, Greek Melic Poets, 154, 160, 498 (London, Macmillan, 1900).

⁴Rhopalic verses are verses in which each word has one syllable more than the preceding word has. C. K. >.

⁵They were ridiculed by Gellius 14.6.4; he refers also to the discovery of acrostics, e. g. Iliad 24.1-5 (AETKH).

δλβύδαμον. Another is *e quibus insignis pulcherrima Deiopea* (compare Aeneid 1.72). They are not hard to make; Servius (De Centum Metris 9.25) quotes Rem tibi confeci, doctissime, dulcisonoram.

But eccentricities proper begin about 500 B. C., with the sophistication of poetry. The Greeks, who were, as a rule, far less sensitive to alliteration than the Romans were, yet found something displeasing⁶ about sigmatic lines, to which Greek verse is prone—I have noticed many such lines in tragedy⁷. So we find Lasus of Hermione writing an ὠδὴ Ἀσιγμος in which sigma was entirely avoided (Bergk is incredulous about such a feat in the case of so early a writer). Later, we hear of an asigmatic Odyssey by Tryphiodorus (in which the hero's name can never have been mentioned!), which is referred to in Spectator 63, and of an asigmatic tragedy by Dionysius⁸.

It is more likely that Tryphiodorus's Odyssey was lipogrammatic, like the Iliad of Nestor of Laranda, who wrote under the Emperor Severus, omitting one letter in each book, alpha in 1, beta in 2, etc.

One is, however, somewhat surprised to find that the father of these poetic trifles was no other than Simonides: perhaps this may be explained by the fact (I think it is a fact) that he was the first purely 'literary man' of Greece. At any rate it is in his fragments that we find the first examples of those literary *lours de force* which later became so common. For instance, he is the first to bring intractable proper names into his verses by illegitimate tmesis (Homer had to take liberties with the verse to introduce names like Σκάμανδρος, ὀλέσσσα Ζάκυνθος). Compare Simonides, Fragment 134, in Bergk, Poetae Lyrici Graeci²,

ἡ μέγ' Ἀθηναίοισι φῶς γένετ' ἦνικ' Ἀριστο-
γέτωρ Ἰππάρχον κτεῖνε καὶ Ἀρμόδιον,

⁶But Professor Scott, in the very papers to which Mr. Sedgwick refers, in note 7, maintains vigorously that the Greeks did not find sigma displeasing! C. K. >.

⁷According to Aelius Dionysius in Eustathius, page 813, Pericles avoided sigma, ὡς ἀπεπῆ καὶ πλάτυν. This can hardly have been (as is sometimes thought) the old Attic double sigma, which, like double tau, was no real sibilant at all, but more like English *ch*. The most famous case of sigmatism is Euripides, Medea 476 ἔσωσά σ', ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων δοιοὶ ταῦτόν συνεισέβησαν Ἀργῶν σκάφος, parodied by the comic poet Plato in his Heortae, εὖ γέ σοι γένοιθ', [ἦμας] ὅτι ἔσωσας ἐκ τῶν σίγμα τῶν Εὐρύπιδου (the actual wording of this fragment is largely conjectural), and by Eubulus in the Dionysius, καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖσιν ἐγγελωῖσι πῆμασι, τὰ σίγμα συλλέξαντες, ὡς αὐτοὶ σοφοί. A striking case in the Gospels has been made familiar to English readers by Longfellow: ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε. Other cases are Euripides, Iphigenia in Tauris 705, 1068; Sophocles, Oedipus Rex 425, 1481, 1507; Aeschylus, Eumenides 754. See John A. Scott, Sigmatism in Greek Dramatic Poetry, The American Journal of Philology 29 (1908), 69-77, and Effect of Sigmatism as Shown in Homer, *ibidem*, 30.72-77. W. J. M. Starkie, on Aristophanes, Wasps 565, gives statistics for comedy, and quotes Iliad 9.323.

⁸Smyth, Greek Melic Poets, 300, refers to Thelwall's Song Without a Sibilant.

⁹I do not know what justification Vergil had for *Belides*, with long *i* (Aeneid 2.82). Ausonius managed *Phidias* by counting the first *i* short (Epigrams 12.1 = No. 33, page 323, Teubner text, by R. Peiper). In Sermones 1.5.87 Horace, following the example of Lucilius, apologizes for omitting an unmanageable name. Later Greek took

and Fragment 161,

'Ερμῆν τόνδ' ἀνέθη- Δημήτριος Ὀρτιάδου -κεν,
quoted by Tryphon as a case of *ὑπερβατὸν ἐν ταῖς συλλαβαῖς* (note that the device was here quite unnecessary: the verse might be written 'Ερμῆν τόνδ' Δημήτριος Ὀρτιάδου ἀνέθηκεν). Add Eupolis, Baptae, Fragment 6; Callimachus, Fragment 192.

Perhaps the most ingenious device is that of the anonymous poet who managed Thrasymachus, not by the obvious device of writing Tharsymachus, but by spelling out the name:

Τούνομα θῆτα ρῶ ἀλφα σάν δ' μὴ ἀλφα χί οὐ σάν,
Πατρις Χαλκηδών, ἥ δὲ τέχνη σοφίη.

Critias (Fragment 3), unable to get 'Αλκιβιάδης into elegiacs, substituted an iambic verse for the pentameter. Dionysius (Fragment 1) put the pentameter before the hexameter, while later Greek writers often have two or more hexameters to one pentameter. The *jeu d'esprit* ascribed to Vergil, *sic vos non vobis*—a series of four pentameters beginning thus, subjoined to the hexameter, *Hos ego versiculos feci, tulit alter honores*—is well known.

Coming to Latin, we find in Ennius^{2a}, *Massili-portabant iuvenes ad litora -lanos*, and *cere-minuit -brum* (both quite unnecessary): but it has been thought that the verses may have been invented by Lucilius among his specimens of the hundred kinds of solecism—'as if Ennius had written', etc.

A better example in Latin is afforded by the anonymous poet who wrote *Elio- nam -gabulus*, or by Ausonius's *villa Lucani- mox potieris -aca* (Epistles 5.36). In the Middle Ages the device became quite common, for instance in Eugenius of Toledo and Ermoldus Nigellus. About 1200 A. D. the name of Pope Innocent III gave trouble to his panegyrists, who were reduced to writing *Gregorii quartus In- papa -nocentius heres* (John of Garland), and *In- praefer, et adde -nocenti* (Poetria Nova 7).

Simonides also trifled with sigmatism in a neat Epigram (167):

Σῶσος καὶ Σωσὼ σωτήρια τόνδ' ἀνέθηκαν,
Σῶσος μὲν σωθεῖς, Σωσὼ δ' ὅτι Σῶσος ἐσώθη.

The *s*-sound does not seem to have troubled the Romans much, perhaps because in Latin *s* had so often become *r* between vowels, but the following, quoted by Martianus Capella as an instance of polysigma, is an interesting anticipation of our own 'tongue-twister' about 'Sister Susie sewing shirts for soldiers and sailors': *Sosia in solario soleas sarciebat suo* (perhaps we should add *sibi* after *solario* to make a trochaic tetrameter).

Simonides also seems to have been the inventor of the verse which could be transformed into a different meter. Compare Fragment 173, ridiculed by Timocreon, Fragment 10. Athenaeus (454 F) quotes a poem in ionics by Castorio (Fragment 2), of which the feet are interchangeable without affecting sense or meter (i. e. there is caesura at the end of each foot), as mostly in Horace's ode (3.12) *Miserarum est neque*

amori dare ludum neque dulci mala vino lavere. . . . Athenaeus also says that each foot of Castorio's poem consists of ten letters, but that is not true of the form in which we now have it. He goes on to quote a similar poem, perhaps also by Castorio. But the climax was reached by Optatianus (see below), who has four hexameters which can be reshuffled in eighteen different ways.

Simonides likewise seems to have invented the laconic verse, of which the object is to get the maximum of information into the fewest possible words. See, for instance, Fragment 164: *Κρής Ἀλκμων Διδύμου Φοίβω στέφας*, . . . 'Ἰσθμὺ' ἐλὼν πύξ, 'Alcmon of Crete, son of Didymus, <offers> a garland to Phoebus, having won <it> by boxing at the Isthmus'. Compare Simonides's famous line enumerating the contests of the pentathlon: *ἄλμα, ποδωκίην, δίσκον, ἀκοντα, πάλην*. In a famous epigram of Callimachus (Anthology 7. 447) the laconic Theris apparently complains that his five-word epitaph is too long, which reminds us of the *mol* of Rivarol, when he was asked his opinion of a two-line epigram: "C'est bien, mais il y a des longeurs".

A strange device is the *χαλινοί*, a series of hard words used for spelling lessons (Quintilian 1.1.37), of which the object is to introduce all the letters of the alphabet, without repeating any. They are akin to the famous 'Ἐφέσια Γράμματα, and perhaps magical in origin: the most favorable specimen is *βέδν*, ('air'), *ῥάψ* ('sea'), *χθώμ* (*ν* is here labialized before *π*), *πλήκτρον*, *σφίγξ*. We may compare Professor De Morgan's "Get nymph; quiz sad brow; fix luck". It is interesting to know that some of these *χαλινοί* are actually extant on the very tablets on which schoolboys first wrote them 2000 years ago (see Eric Ziebarth, *Aus der Antiken Schule*, No. 65 of Lietzmann's excellent *Kleine Texte* [Bonn, Marcus and Weber, 1913], a fascinating little book, which contains all ancient school tablets extant, with good notes).

The anagram was apparently not used in classical times, and scholars have refused to accept the anagrams which the ingenuity of Professor D. S. Margoliouth found in the first two lines of the prologues to the *Oresteia*, particularly as the still greater ingenuity of Mr. R. J. Walker found still others (see the *London Spectator*, May 31, 1924).

Alliteration, as was said above, did not strongly affect the Greeks. A notable example, however, of alliteration on *tau* to express furious annoyance will be found in Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 371: *τυφλὸς τὰ τ' ὄτα τὸν τε νοῦν τὰ τ' ὄμματα εἰ*. The same letter in the Anthology (6.194) imitates the sound of the Triton's horn, which was the offering celebrated in the poem: *σῶξεν, θεὰ Τριτοῖ, τὰ τεθέλντα τε τὸν τ' ἀναθέλντα*. With this we may compare Ennius's too famous *At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit* (*Annales* 140, Vahlen²). Notorius is his line *O Tite, tute, Tati, tibi tanta, tyranne, tulisti?* (*Annales* 109), parodied^{2b} by

many liberties. Lucian scans his own name with short alpha, and an epigram on Thucydides has a short upsilon.

^{2a}See Ennius, *Annales* 610, and 609, in J. Vahlen, *Ennianae Poesis Reliquiae* (Teubner, Leipzig, 1903). C. K. >

^{2b}See *The Classical Quarterly* 21 (1927), 88. <For parodies of contemporary Roman comedies and tragedies, especially tragedies of Ennius, by Plautus see my remarks in *The American Journal of Philology* 40 (1919), 238-239, and *Classical Philology* 14 (1919), 49-51, with notes. C. K. >

Plautus, Pseudolus 703-705a (I give Lindsay's text):

Io te, te turanne, te, te ego, qui imperitas Pseudolo,
quaero quoui ter trina triplicia, tribu' modis tria
gaudia,
artibus tribu' tris demeritas dem laetities, de tribus
fraude partas per malitiam....

Roman poetry is indeed so full of alliteration that it is unnecessary to quote examples: not till the Middle Ages was it used as a mere *tour de force*. We then find Hucbald, who died in 930, writing 146 hexameters on Charles the Bald, Carolus Calvus, every word of which begins with C. Compare e. g. Carmina clarisonae calvis cantate Camenae.... This will be found in the Poetae Aevi Carolini, 4.267. The Dominican Placentius, who died in 1548, wrote a Pugna Porcorum, in 253 hexameters, of which every word begins with P. For alliteration, again, compare Cambridge Songs, No. 30, of K. Strecker's edition, in the Monumenta Germaniae Historica...., a poem of nine lines of which each word begins with C (tenth century?). D. C. Seybold's Lusitania Ingenii (Strasbourg, 1792) contains many such poems, including Canum cum Cantis Certamen, by C. Catullus Caninius (six pages), and a piece of twenty-seven pages, prose and verse, on Pope Joan, of which every word begins with P: it is dated, by a chronogram, in 1540.

It is in Roman times that we first find retrograde verses (*versus reciproci*) widely cultivated. These were verses which could be scanned in both directions, often in different meters, like those of Simonides referred to above. They were called in Greek *ἀναστροφοντες*, or *ἀνακυκλικοί*. Specimens are quoted by Marius Victorinus 3.7: esse bonus si vis, cole divos, optime Pansa; omine felici, Pansa, precare deos. The first line reversed makes a Sotadean, the second a senarius. Similar are astra tenet caelum, mare classes, area messes, and repetita pinus mobile exseruit caput, which both, reversed, make Sotadeans (see Quintilian 9.4.90).

Another specimen quoted by Marius Victorinus is Icarium Notus ut confidens flamine tranat, caerula verrentes sic freta Nereides <tranant>.

This is an elegiac couplet both ways. Compare Diomedes 3.34.59 and Servius, De Centrum Metris 3.23-25. Sidonius Apollinaris gives a good example (Epistulae 8.11):

praecipiti modo quod decurrit tramite flumen,
tempore consumptum, iam modo deficiet¹⁰.

Number 81 of the Latin Anthology edited by Riese gives 32 lines of these. Such verses were found in Vergil, e. g. Aeneid 1.8: Musa mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso, which makes a hexameter even when reversed.

An early example in Greek is the metrical argument of a comedy written on the verso of a Ghorân papyrus of the second century B. C., beginning

Ἐρως, Ἀφροδίτης υἱός, ἐπιεικής, νέος,

<¹⁰Reading backwards we have the following couplets:

Nereides freta sic verrentes caerula tranat
flamine confidens ut Notus Icarium.

deficiet modo iam consumptum tempore flumen
tramite decurrit quod modo praecipiti.

It would be too much to expect sense, syntax, and meter all combined in the reversed forms. C. K.>

which makes a trimeter both ways. Likewise Numbers 314 to 320, and 323 of the Greek Anthology, Book 5, consist of retrograde verses, cleverly translated into Latin by Hugo Grotius in the same way.

Still more difficult are *carcini* (palindromes), in which every single letter is to be reversed: for the name we may compare the canon cancrizans of the musicians of the Renaissance, many of whose subtleties remind us of this poetical jugglery. The oldest example of the *carcini* is, no doubt, the *graffito* scratched on a wall, both at Pompeii and at Vidy (Canton Vaud: see Journal of Hellenic Studies 41 [1921], 69):

ἡ δὲ μοι Διὸς ἄρ' ἀπάντα παρά σοι, Διομήδην.

The cleverest is undoubtedly *νῆψον ἀνδρημα, μὴ μόνον ὄψιν*, which was commonly inscribed on fountains or holy-water stoups, for instance at St. Sophia. It is still often found in Churches, for instance Notre Dame at Paris, St. Martin's, Ludgate, and Dulwich College Chapel. These, with others, attributed to the Emperor Leo Philosophus, who died in 911, will be found in the Planudean Anthology, Numbers 386* and 386** of the Didot Edition.

The only classical example in Latin is that quoted by Sidonius (Epistulae 8.11): Roma tibi subito motibus ibit amor. This was christianized by prefixing the hexameter signa te, signa: temere me tangis et angis, and applied to an adventure of St. Martin with the devil, whom he compelled by the sign of the cross to carry him to Rome. A paraphrase of the couplet would run thus: 'That's it: cross yourself, do! You need not bother me so: Rome, your desire, shall move to you'. The legend was obviously invented to give sense to the pentameter.

A good medieval example is quoted by Camden, in his 'Remains' (he was much interested in anagrams and similar trifles):

Odo tenet mulum, madidam mappam tenet Anna. Note that this is of the easier variety in which each word is a palindrome. Another, applied to the Witches' Sabbath, runs thus: In girum imus noctu et consumimur igni, 'We dance nightly and are consumed by <hell> fire'.

The acrostic seems to appear first about 300 B. C. We are told that Dionysius 'the Renegade'¹¹ wrote a play Parthenopaeus which he attributed to Sophocles, deceiving even the critic Heraclides Ponticus (who himself fathered his tragedies on Thespis), until he pointed out that he had inserted the acrostic 'Heraclides is no judge of literature'.

Acrostic Psalms, of which the first section began with Aleph, the second with Beth, and so on, were common in Hebrew, no doubt as a mnemonic device (compare e. g. Psalm 119, where the Authorized Version retains the Hebrew alphabet), and may have become

¹⁰Distinguish him from Dionysius the Tyrant, whose chief title to poetic fame is his inventing of new senses for old words: *βαλλάντιον*, ('purse') = 'spear', from *βαλλάντιον*; *μυστήριον*, = 'mouse-trap', from *μυστήριον*. For this procedure he had the precedent of Sophocles himself, who used, for example, *ἰσχυρά* ('fig') = 'anchor', from *ἰσχω*. The limit is reached by the hexameter quoted by Tryphon (Spengel, Rhetores Graeci, 3.193). *γῆς ἔθανεν καταδέσμου, δὲ δ' ἀγγέλων ἀφάρμαρην*, which is a kind of riddle (*γῆς* = *ἄλαν*, *καταδέσμου* = *τελῶμωντος*, *ἀγγέλων* = *ὄπλων*).

known to the Alexandrian scholars, who were assiduous cultivators of the acrostic. From the Psalms acrostics passed into Christian hymns (an example is St. Augustine's abecedarian psalm against the Donatists), and formed a characteristic feature of Greek hymnology: see Smith's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, s. v. Acrostic. They were also frequent in epitaphs; see e. g. Bücheler, *Carmina Epigraphica* 511-516.

Forgers of oracles defeated their own ends by introducing acrostics. Varro thus detected a forgery (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates* 4.62), and Cicero used this argument against the authenticity of the Sibylline Oracles current in his day, incidentally mentioning (*De Divinatione* 2.111) that Ennius introduced into one of his poems the acrostic Ennius Fecit. The Sibylline Oracles that have come down to us contain acrostics, and are clearly Jewish and Christian forgeries with the most patent biblical echoes.

The acrostic arguments to Plautus and Terence are well known: it is not so well known that the Ghorân papyrus referred to above contains an abecedarian argument to a Greek comedy.

Later we find Commodian writing his *Instructiones* entirely in acrostic form, and Philostratus writing twelve books of which the initial letters formed an acrostic of his own name, just as Colonna in Renaissance times made the initials of each chapter of his *Polyphili Hypnerotomachia* into a confession of love: Poliam Frater Franciscus Columna peramavit.

Ausonius (*Epigram* 126: Number 85, page 343, in the Teubner text, by R. Peiper) uses an acrostic to indicate an obscene word. The authorship of the *Ilias Latina* is probably concealed in the initial letters of the first and last eight verses. However, this is somewhat of a puzzle, since our present texts give ITALICES SCQIPSIT, and apart from the presumed acrostics there is no reason to suspect the reading, nor does any obvious emendation present itself.

But the greatest sinner in this respect was Optatianus Porfirius (fourth century). In one of his poems the first letters of the lines constitute a greeting to the Emperor Constantine, while the tenth, nineteenth, and twenty-eighth make three Greek verses. Another is written *στοιχῆδον*, like archaic Greek inscriptions: the lines all have the same number of letters, and are written in vertical as well as horizontal lines (a device also used by Flavius Felix¹²). Some have a pattern, marked by rubricated letters. One poem of twenty-six hexameters has twenty-five letters in the first verse, twenty-six in the second, and so on to the twenty-sixth, which has fifty.

The only parallel to Porfirius in complexity that I know of is a poem quoted in Aimoin's *Life of Abbo*, which will be found in P. Leyser, *Historia Poetarum et Poematum Medii Aevi*. This consists of an acromeso-telestich reading Otto, valens Caesar, nostro te cede coturno, with two semi-mesostichs—on one side *Otto Caesar*, on the other *Abbo abbas*. Other complicated specimens of this same age (about the tenth

century) will be found in the third volume of the *Poetae Aevi Carolini*.

The most famous of Latin acrostics, which belongs, apparently, somewhere toward the end of the Middle Ages, is really a word-square. This, a quintuple acrostic, is the original of our crossword puzzles:

S A T O R
A R E P O
T E N E T
O P E R A
R O T A S

It is supposed to mean, 'The ploughman Arepo holds the wheels at work', but it has also been read as 'Sat orare poten, et opera rotas?', 'Can you pray, and yet do you gabble the Offices?'

Perhaps the most futile form of trifling is the discovery or construction of *ισοψηφα*, that is lines of which the letters taken as numerals add up to the same total. This also may have been suggested by contact with Jews, who attached mystical significance to such numbers (compare the much-disputed Number of the Beast in Revelations 13.18). This fancy was exalted by the Cabbalists to the pseudo-science of Gematria, and was practised by the Gnostics, on whose gems and amulets *Abraxas* is isopsephic to *Μελθρσ* (= 365).

Isopsepha were discovered in Homer, e. g. *Iliad* 7. 364 = 7.265 (= 3498), 19.306-307 = 2848. The chief practitioner of such verses was Leonidas of Alexandria, of whose work specimens will be found in the *Anthology*, 6.321-330 (except 323), in which the letters of each verse or couplet add up to the same total¹³.

The cento, properly a 'patchwork', was a poem composed of fragments of other poets' works. The most famous were those of Proba (see Gibbon, Chapter 31), who compiled biblical narratives from fragments of Vergil, and the *Christus Patiens*, a Byzantine work wrongly attributed to Gregory Nazianzen, which relates the passion-story in iambs taken from Attic tragedy, particularly the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchae*, and is of some critical importance for the text of Euripides.

The Latin *Anthology* contains several centos, notably the *Medea* of Hosidius Geta—a whole play compiled from Vergil. Ausonius wrote a *Cento Nuptialis*, in which he boasts that he has made the chaste Vergil utter indecencies, that is the *Fascennine Verses* which formed an essential part of Roman marriage ceremonies.

Ausonius seems to have had a pretty taste for every kind of impropriety; he even uses the shapes of Greek letters to illustrate indecent ideas. The use of the shapes of letters to set forth ideas was an old one: the Pythagoreans made epsilon a symbol of the branching paths of human life. Euripides, Agathon, and Theodectes all introduce an illiterate peasant describing the inscription ΘΗΣΕΥΣ by the forms of the letters. This device was perhaps borrowed from Callias, who even wrote a *Γραμματικὴ Τραγῳδία*, 'an ABC-book in the form of a tragedy', as Bergk calls it. In this, the chorus in its song and dance represented a

¹²Still more ingenious are twelve verses in *Anthologia Latina* 394 (Riese). There is one verse on each month, with as many letters as there are days in that month, a fact which leads to some nice textual problems.

¹³See *Anthology* 10.43 for a different kind of numerical epigram.

spelling-lesson, and the twenty-four letters of the Ionic alphabet were the dramatic personae. They are named in four iambic lines. The evolutions of the chorus apparently gave Euripides hints for those of the Medea, while Sophocles is said to have imitated the play in his Oedipus Rex, in allowing elision at the end of a trimeter (331), and in the Amphiarus, by introducing a character τὰ γράμματα ὀρχούμενος.

I have hardly patience to describe figurate, or shaped, poems, in which the lengths of the various lines are so arranged that the poem assumes the shape of its subject, for instance, an egg, an axe, wings (by Simmias of Rhodes), a Pan's pipe (by Theocritus), altars (by Dosiades and another), and, in Christian times, the Cross. The practice was adopted in Latin by Laevius, in his Technopaegnia, and, it is needless to say, by the incorrigible Optatian. The practice might seem utterly beneath contempt, had not George Herbert ennobled it by his genius and piety, and had not Rabelais inserted a bottle-poem in his Pantagruel¹⁴.

Passing over other literary frivolities, we will conclude with a reference to the epigram of Martial directed against such *ineptiae* (2.86), from which our motto, at the beginning of this paper, is taken, and a few more of the *tours de force* of Ausonius, a born trifler. In Idyll 12 Ausonius writes over a hundred hexameters all ending in a monosyllable, and sixteen both beginning and ending in a monosyllable. In Epistle 20 we get the only macaronic verse of ancient times known to me. This is a mixture of Greek and Latin, including such a monstrosity as *vinolo bonolo*, which reminds me of Cicero's *facileon* (Ad Atticum 1.16. 13). The following is rather neat and will illustrate the decadence of the language in Ausonius's time (Epigram 48: = VIII, page 314, in the Teubner text, by R. Peiper [1886]):

"Reminisco" Rufus dixit in versu suo:
cor¹⁵ ergo versus, immo Rufus, non habet.

The next epigram is on the same theme—and incidentally illustrates the quantity *cōr*, which has sometimes been doubted.

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SOME LATER LATIN WRITERS OF SPAIN¹

We are so accustomed to evaluate Latin literature under certain familiar captions—the Roman Republic, the Golden Age of Augustus, and the Silver Age—that we are prone to forget the long centuries in which, after the Silver Age, literary activity in the language of the ancient Romans was continued throughout the great realm once subject to their sovereign sway. When we think of Latin writers of Spain, our minds naturally revert to Martial, to the Senecas, and to

¹⁴The origin is perhaps in magic, where the 'Wing of Hermes' was a favorite pattern: compare the triangular arrangement of ABRACADABRA (Serenus Sammonicus 944 ff.).

¹⁵cor here = 'brains'. <In The Loeb Classical Library Mr. Hugh G. Evelyn White published, in two volumes, a translation of the works of Ausonius (1919, 1921). In 2.161 he translates this epigram as follows: "Reminisco, wrote Rufus in his verse: so then the verse—nay, Rufus—has no cor (wit)". C. K.>

¹This paper was read at the annual meeting of The Classical Association of the Middle West and South, held at New Orleans, on April 4, 1930.

Quintilian. The subject of the present paper is, however, the not inconsiderable body of literature produced in the Latin tongue by natives of Spain in the long period between the decline of the political power of Rome and the coming of the Arabs. I shall attempt to enumerate at least the outstanding Christian Latin writers of Spain and briefly to appraise their works.

St. Jerome, De Viris Illustribus 84, gives practically the sole information we possess with respect to the life and the time of Gaius Vettius Aquilinus Iuvencus, the first Christian Latin poet. He says:

'Iuvencus, a Spanish presbyter of very noble family, translating almost word for word into hexameter verses the four Gospels, composed four books, and added thereto (in the same meter) somewhat regarding the order of the sacraments. He flourished under the Emperor Constantine'.

Iuvencus's date, then, is about 330.

Though Iuvencus divided his Gospel epic into four books, he did not give the story of Christ's ministry four times. He followed St. Matthew as chief source, supplementing his account from St. Luke and St. John, less often from St. Mark.

Referring in the Preface of his poem (10) to Vergil's Aeneid², whose influence is apparent in almost every line of his work, Iuvencus makes at the outset (15-18) a sharp and clear-cut distinction between the subject-matter of the ancient pagan epics and his own theme: 'But if those songs deserved so long a fame which weave a lying tale from the deeds of men of old, in my own case sure faith in a praise eternal shall bring me immortal renown and repay my merit'.

The contrast is between the *mendacia* of the ancients and his own *certa fides*. Iuvencus sets forth (19) the living Truth, the deeds of the Christ on Earth: nam mihi carmen erit Christi vitalia gesta.

The narrative begins, entertainingly enough (1-3), with the words:

Rex fuit Herodes Iudaea in gente cruentus,
sub quo servator iusti templique sacerdos
Zacharias. . .

The story is told in the main simply and effectively. The poem has a charm which made it for centuries a popular school-book during the Middle Ages, in the time of Petrarch as well as in the days of Charles the Great. Here is the poetical account of the Nativity (160-174):

Ecce Dei monitu visus descendere caelo
nuntius, at subitus terror tremefacta pavore
prostravit viridi pastorum corpora terrae.
Talis et attonitis caelo vox missa cucurrit:
"Ponite terrorem mentis, mea sumite dicta,
pastores, quibus haec ingentia gaudia porto.
Nam genitus puer est Daudis origine clara,
qui populis lucem mox laetitiamque propaget.
Hoc signum dicam, puerum quod cernere vobis
iam licet implentem gracili praeseptia voce".
Talia dicenti iunguntur milia plebis
caelestis cunctique Deum laudantque rogantque,
talis et uniti uox agminis aera complet:
gloria supremum comitatur debita patrem;
in terris iustos homines pax digna sequetur.

Iuvencus is further significant as the founder of a tradition, for many, emboldened by his example,

²Illos Minciadae celebrat dulcedo Maronis.

essayed similar poetic versions of other portions of the Scriptures. Moreover, a poetess of the fourth century, whose name was Falconia Proba, hit upon the ingenious device of patching together fragments taken from Vergil to retell the Biblical narrative. The following assemblage of classic phrases in her Cento (346-349) gives the story of Bethlehem in true Vergilian language:

Iamque aderat promissa dies, quo tempore primum
extulit os sacrum divinae stirpis origo
missus in imperium, venitque in corpore virtus
mixta deo: subiit cari genitoris imago.

Perhaps a comparison of these lines with the beautiful narrative of Iuvenius quoted above may aid our appreciation of the merits of the first Christian Latin poet.

Damasus I, Bishop of Rome from 366-384, who commissioned St. Jerome to undertake his revision and translation of the Latin Bible, has the additional distinction of standing second among the Spanish poets of his century. He is the author of epigrams and inscriptions interesting primarily from a historical viewpoint. But he anticipated Prudentius in writing poems in praise of the martyrs.

Priscillianus, a Spaniard of the fourth century who is generally regarded as the first 'heretic' to be condemned and executed by the orthodox Catholic Church, deserves at least passing mention among the later Latin writers of Spain. For St. Jerome states that Priscillianus, Abilae episcopus... edidit multa opuscula, de quibus ad nos aliqua pervenerunt. Eleven treatises ascribed to him were discovered in 1885. Nevertheless the authorship of these pieces is still a matter of considerable doubt, save in the case of the *Canones in Pauli Apostoli Epistulas*, a collection of excerpts from St. Paul's writings.

Hispanos Deus adspicit benignus, 'God looks with a kindly eye upon the Spaniards', says Prudentius, that fourth century patriotic Christian son of Spain, in *Peristephanon* 6.4. In this brief verse we find an intimation of his two chief characteristics as a man and as a writer: his loyalty to the State (to his native province, but also to 'golden Rome', the mistress of the world), and his zeal for the Church. In *Peristephanon* 4.1 he celebrates Saragossa, his birthplace, as *Caesaraugusta studiosa Christi*, where 'Christ dwells in every street, Christ is everywhere'. Prudentius has been acclaimed as not only the greatest of ancient Christian poets³, but also as the first great representative of a real Christian literature⁴. He invented the Christian ode and created Christian allegory. Those who recognize and seek to appraise duly his classic diction and beauty of style term him "the Vergil and the Horace of the Christians"⁵. Others, seeing in him a religious fervor akin to the sincere and passionate altruism of the great pagan poet of the Roman Republic, have called him

'the Christian Lucretius'⁶. Prudentius's essential fairness and his loyalty to Rome are clearly indicated in the celebrated judgment which he passes on the Emperor Julian, commonly known as 'the Apostate': *perfidus ille deo, quamvis non perfidus urbi*, 'a traitor, indeed, to God, but not a traitor to Rome'⁷.

The unification of the world under the domination of Rome Prudentius interprets in accordance with his Christian faith, and he gives expression to the new theory that Christ made the Roman Empire great that all mankind might be one in Him. In *Contra Symmachum* 2.582-591, 618-620 he writes thus:

'Shall I tell you, O Roman, the cause which has brought to your efforts so great an achievement? Shall I say by whose fostering power your glory has grown, and has now such prestige that it holds in check the entire world under your guidance and control? It was God who willed to unite these peoples discordant in language, and kingdoms unlike in their culture. He ordained that all amenable to civilizing influences should become subject to a single empire, and bear her mild sway in harmonious accord, that love of religion might hold the hearts of men fast bound. For such union is not worthy of Christ unless one common loyalty unites mutually interdependent peoples.... This, then, was the outcome of the great victories and triumphs of the Roman Empire: believe me, the way was prepared for the Christ and his imminent coming'.

Elsewhere (*Peristephanon* 2.433) Prudentius through the person of St. Lawrence, the martyr, gives utterance to a petition that Rome may herself become truly converted to Christianity and that she may unite all the cities of the world in the Christian faith: 'May Romulus become a believer, and Numa himself believe in thee'.

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens was born in 348. He published his poems in 405, and died, apparently, before the sack of Rome by the Goths under Alaric in 410. In a rather pathetic and wholly appealing Preface to his work he gives us a few scant biographical details, relating how, at the age of fifty-seven, he looked back upon his past life with regret for its futility and looked forward with trepidation to approaching old age: 'What useful thing have I done in all these years?' Yet his life had been one of honorable service to the State. But he is now determined to write hymns, combat heresies, defend the faith, tread paganism beneath his feet, overthrow idols, and sing the praises of martyrs and of the Apostles⁸.

Wealth another man may bring,
The needs and sorrows of the poor relieving;
I, alack, can only sing....

Be the service ne'er so slight
God owns it. Then whatever Time is bringing,
This shall still be my delight
That Christ has had the tribute of my singing.

The list of proposed tasks which I have just enumerated is in fact the bibliography of Prudentius.

(1) He wrote hymns, twelve in number, known as the *Cathemerinon*, or 'Daily Round', in a variety of meters.

³So E. K. Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages*, 192 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928). <For Professor Rand's book see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 22.167-168. C. K.>.

⁴See Prudentius, *Apotheosis* 454.

²See E. S. Bouchier, *Spain under the Roman Empire*, 181 (Oxford, B. H. Blackwell, 1914). <For this book see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 8.134-135. C. K.>.

³See F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages*, 57 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1927). <For this work see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 23.54-56. C. K.>.

⁴Bentley called Prudentius "Christianorum Maro et Placcus". This fact is noted by de Labriolle, 465 (see note 10, below), and by Professor Rand, 192 (see note 6, below).

⁵See Epilogue 5-8, 31-34. I give the translation by T. R. Glover in *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century*, 277 (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1901).

Though they are too long to be used in their entirety for congregational singing, parts of them are still to be found in the hymn books in use in our Churches to-day. Some of you may have sung to Franz Schubert's music these verses⁹:

Now with creation's morning song
Let us, as children of the day,
With wakened heart and purpose strong,
The works of darkness cast away.

Most famous are his 'Hymn for the Burial of the Dead' (10) and the 'Hymn for the Epiphany' (12), addressed to the Holy Innocents, the first martyrs of Christ¹⁰:

Salvete flores martyrum,
quos lucis ipso in limine
Christi insecutor sustulit,
ceu turbo nascentes rosas:

vos prima Christi victima,
grex immolatorum tener,
aram ante ipsam simplices
palma et coronis luditis.

Hail, ye blossoms of martyrdom, whom, on the very threshold of life, Christ's persecutor hath mown down, like budding roses in a sudden gust of wind—First victims of Christ, tender flock of sacrifice, innocently ye sport with palm and crown at the very foot of the altar....

Because of their originality and their literary character the Hymns of Prudentius have attracted attention and excited the admiration of readers in every age.

A stanza from the hymn 'Before Meat' (3) deserves quotation for the beautiful expression there given to Prudentius's views on man's place in the universe¹¹:

He, it is He, to us all things doth yield,
Rulers of all He hath framed us to be;
All that the earth or the sky or the sea
Bears in the flood or the air or the field,
These He made mine; for Himself
He made me.

(2) In the performance of his expressed intention to use his literary gifts to combat heresies, defend the Catholic faith, tread the pagans under foot, and overthrow idols, Prudentius composed a series of five didactic poems, Apotheosis, Hamartigenia, Psychomachia, Contra Symmachum, Dittochaon.

In the Apotheosis, in which Prudentius seeks to set forth the true nature of our Lord and to refute certain heretical beliefs that have sprung up, we find, despite the apparently unpromising theme, passages of real power. Perhaps most notable is the stirring account of how the heathen oracles grew dumb at the birth of Christ (435-448). Then there is the famous account (449-454) of the last great pagan, the Emperor Julian, a figure remembered by Prudentius from the days of his youth: *Me puero, ut memini, ductor fortissimus armis*. Nor should we fail to mention the dramatic scene (see especially 501-502) wherein a Christian soldier, present at a sacrifice to Hecate, brings the rites to naught,

dismays the Emperor himself, and converts the witnesses present.

The Hamartigenia deals with the problem of evil: *Si non vult Deus esse malum, cur non vetat?* Prudentius replies that a man cannot voluntarily become good unless he has a will free to choose another course. Enforced goodness would be inglorious and of no moral significance. The whole work is a defense of orthodox doctrine against the dualism of Marcion, who taught that there were two Gods, one of whom was the author of evil.

In the Psychomachia of Prudentius we find the first Christian allegory in poetic form. Its theme is the progress of the Christian faith, and it details a series of combats between personifications of individual virtues and vices. These manifold abstractions conduct themselves in approved Vergilian epic style, and engage in endless wordy fray. This book was one of the most popular and most widely read in the Middle Ages, and exercised considerable influence also upon medieval religious art.

The work *Contra Symmachum*, which deals, in two books, with the Altar of Victory controversy, is a spirited attack upon heathenism. We have already quoted from this poem the familiar passage in which the author reconciles his patriotic love of Rome with his Christian faith. There is also a famous appeal to the Emperor Honorius to put an end to the shameful slaughter of men in the gladiatorial games to make a Roman holiday¹²:

*Tu mortes miserorum hominum prohibeto litari,
nullus in urbe cadat, cuius sit poena voluptas.*

In 404, two years after the publication of the work, this prayer was answered, tradition said, by the death of Telemachus¹³ at the hands of the mob when he sought to part the combatants in the arena, for Honorius was induced thereby to abolish gladiatorial shows forever. It is notable that in his attack upon paganism Prudentius goes to the heart of the matter by attributing the persistence of heathenism to the heathen associations of childhood. He particularly assails the living beliefs of his time, such as astrology, sun-worship, and a fear of Fate. His triumphant conclusion is this (2. 635-636):

*Iam mundus te, Christe, capit, quem congrege nexu
pax et Roma tenet.*

The Dittochaon, 'Two-fold Nourishment' (the title refers to the Old and the New Testaments), consists of a series of quatrains intended to explain works of art on sacred subjects. These descriptions are of more value for the study of iconography than for that of literature.

(3) Finally, Prudentius fulfilled his intention of praising the martyrs by the composition of a group of fourteen hymns entitled *Peristephanon*, On The Crowns. Many of the saints thus glorified were fellow-countrymen of his. The lines¹⁴ found at the opening of the hymn which celebrates the martyrs of his birth-place, Saragossa, are strongly reminiscent of Horace, *Carmina* 1.2.1-4:

⁹Translated by Edward Caswall, in 1849, and adapted by Samuel Longfellow, 1864. See *Hymns of the Christian Life*, No. 2 (New York, A. S. Barnes and Co., 1926).

¹⁰I give the translation by Herbert Wilson, in *Pierre de Labriolle, History and Literature of Christianity*, translated by Herbert Wilson (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1925). See page 449.

¹¹The translation is by T. R. Glover, in *Life and Letters of the Fourth Century*, 268 (see note 8, above).

¹²2.1125-1126.

¹³For the story of Telemachus see e.g. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 5.160 (in the edition by J. B. Bury, New York: The Wheeler Publishing Co.).

¹⁴*Peristephanon* 4.9-12.

cum deus dextram quatiens coruscant
 nube subnixus veniet rubente,
 gentibus iustam positurus aequo
 pondere libram.

These short poems in lyric meters, almost ballad-like in content, are notable chiefly from a historical viewpoint.

Professor Rand¹⁵ calls attention to the two styles in the work of Prudentius, (1) classical treatment of the legend in a complicated meter, and (2) a style absolutely simple: "...Prudentius brushes aside all gorgeousness and lets the story of a sainted life and a martyr's death shine in its own light..." He adds: "...In illustrating so clearly the two opposite styles, Prudentius provided models for them both in Mediaeval Latin literature, where the two courses, high and low, run on in both prose and verse".

But Prudentius's inspiration is ever one and the same. He cries¹⁶:

Let me chant in sacred numbers, as I strike each
 sounding string,
 Chant in sweet melodious anthems, glorious deeds of
 Christ our King;
 He, my Muse, shall be thy story; with His praise my
 lyre shall ring.

Paulus Orosius, of Tarragona, a disciple and friend of St. Augustine, was born in 390. He became a priest at Bracara, in Gallaecia. In 414 he journeyed to Hippo, in Africa, to meet for the first time the great man who exercised so strong an influence over him. Augustine soon sent the young Spanish presbyter on to Palestine, to study at Bethlehem, under St. Jerome. Here, doubtless from first-hand knowledge acquired in Spain, he wrote a monograph dealing with the heretical views of Priscillianus and his followers; this he dedicated to Augustine. In 415 he published an attack on Pelagianism. But his great work, undertaken, on his return to Africa, at the suggestion of his teacher, and completed by 417, is the work entitled *Adversum Paganos Libri VII*. Like Augustine's *City of God*, this volume is intended as a reply to the accusation commonly brought against the Christians in his day, that the weakness of the Roman Empire and the invasions of the barbarians were punishments sent by the gods of Rome on account of the abandonment of the ancient religion. Orosius undertakes to refute these charges by proving that greater disasters occurred before the conversion of Rome to the new faith. Together with this negative aim, Orosius has the definite purpose of defending and exalting the Church, and of indicating God's providence as it is revealed in human history. The close connection and companionship between Orosius and Augustine are evident in the opening sentence of the book: *Praeceptis tuis parui, beatissime pater Augustine*. Elsewhere he says¹⁷:

'You bade me to arrange and briefly set forth within the compass of a book instances, obtained from all the

records of histories and annals available at the present time, of the horrors of war, the ravages of disease, the wasting of famine, terrors of earthquakes, unusual devastation by flood, fearful eruptions of volcanoes, disastrous thunder storms, great damage occasioned by hail and even notable cases of murder and scandal that, I might find, had occurred in the ages of the past'.

With this purpose specifically in view Orosius composed, in prose, an outline of universal history from the creation of Adam to the year 417, contrasting with the unhappy days of the past the blessings of a continuous peace heretofore unknown.

Of course, in a work of such scope the author is obliged to draw freely upon his predecessors in the field of history, and his own book was likewise a source for later writers, notably Marcellinus Comes, the Gothic historian Iordanes, Bede, Isidore of Seville, Gregory of Tours, and Otto of Freising.

There is occasionally evident in the work of Orosius a certain national spirit which manifests itself in criticism of the Empire. So, when he is relating the warfare of Rome with the valiant Spanish city, Numantia, he cries (5.4.5): *Cur falso vobis, Romani, magna illa nomina iustitiae, fidei, fortitudinis, et misericordiae vindicatis? A Numantinis haec verius discite*.

But perhaps the chief significance of Orosius for literary history lies in his contribution to the philosophy of history by the conception of the Providence of God as a force active through all the ages in the affairs of men.

The last great name in the list of the later Latin writers of Spain is that of Isidore of Seville, who was born in 570, at Cartagena. His elder brother Leander became Bishop of Seville, in 576. Isidore succeeded him in this office in 599 or 600. He died in 636.

Isidore not only served his own age by his personal knowledge, gained by wide reading, and by his tireless collection of books, but is also of significance for the Middle Ages as a whole. In his *Etymologiae* (also called *Origines*), or 'Encyclopedias', he has provided a mine of information. He gives excerpts from earlier writers, many of which have preserved ancient writings which might else have perished. This work in particular exercised great influence for generations on Spain and on other nations of Western Europe.

Isidore has been characterized¹⁸ as 'the most significant figure of his century, and the last Literator of the Roman Empire...' He was the author of countless works in the fields of history, grammar, and theology, but the most significant and important of them all is, as has been intimated, the *Etymologiae*, or *Origines*, in twenty books. "...To understand Isidore's mental world is nearly to reach the limits of the knowledge of his time", says Dr. Ernest Brehaut¹⁹.

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¹⁵Founders of the Middle Ages, 192 (see note 6, above).

¹⁶Hymnus Omnis Horae (Cathermerion 9), translated by R. F. Davis. The translation is quoted by Otto J. Kuhnmueller, *Early Christian Latin Poets from the Fourth to the Sixth Century*, 150 (Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1929).

¹⁷*Adversum Paganos* I, Prologus 10.

¹⁸By W. S. Teuffel, *Geschichte der Römischen Literatur*, § 496 (= 3.540, in the sixth edition, by Wilhelm Kroll and Franz Skutsch [Leipzig, Teubner, 1913]).

¹⁹On Isidore of Seville see especially the volume entitled *An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages*, by Ernest Brehaut (Columbia University Press, 1912). This quotation is from page 16.